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Secretariat

28 February 2002

Information circular*

To: Members of the staff at Headquarters

From: The Under-Secretary-General for Management

Subject: **Budget constraints and support service reductions**

1. This circular is issued to apprise staff members of a number of sharp cutbacks in services which will affect working conditions in the current biennium. The General Assembly when it approved the programme budget for the biennium 2002-2003 reduced the real level of resources available to the Organization by $75 million.

2. It will be recalled that the General Assembly decided, in addition to adjusting vacancy factors, to reduce the resources proposed by the Secretary-General for allocation for specific operational requirements, as follows:

(a) Travel of staff, by 2,800,000 dollars;

(b) Contractual services, by 6,400,000 dollars;

(c) General operating expenses, by 19,700,000 dollars;

(d) Supplies and materials, by 1,400,000 dollars;

(e) Furniture and equipment, by 7,200,000 dollars;

(f) Consultants and experts, ... by 2,000,000 dollars;

(g) Information technology, ... by 10,000,000 doll. ..

3. The impact of these cuts will be particularly marked as they relate directly to expenditures which are largely governed by existing contractual obligations for the payment of rent, utilities, and information technology infrastructure services. The Organization does not have sufficient financial resources to maintain services for meetings, facilities management and information technology at existing levels. Accordingly, staff, delegates and visitors will inevitably experience reduction or degradation of some services as outlined below.

* The present circular will be in effect until further notice.

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4. Meeting services. With immediate effect the Secretariat will, with the exception of the Security Council and plenary meetings of the General Assembly in force majeure situations, no longer service weekend and night meetings.

5. Facilities management. With immediate effect, the following arrangements will be introduced:

- Air conditioning and heating will be reduced after 5 p.m. on weekdays, and throughout weekends.
- Cleaning services will be reduced in frequency and scope.
- No new furniture or workstations will be supplied. Only furniture that is beyond repair will be replaced.
- Only the most essential renovation, electrical work and moving services will be provided.
- Elevator operator service will be discontinued.
- Coat attendant services for the conference areas will be discontinued.
- Pitcher water supply to conference rooms will be discontinued.

In addition to the above, other internal measures will be taken to further reduce costs. Owing to the need to reduce the number of contract personnel, there will undoubtedly be delays in response time for various office space, telephone, computer, electrical and other utility works.

6. Information technology services. As a result of the cuts, services which are provided through external contractors will be affected as follows:

- On-site 24-hour monitoring and management of central systems will no longer be possible. This is likely to affect the availability of electronic mail, Internet, ODS and IMIS during nights and weekends. Furthermore, it should be noted that malfunctioning of the Internet infrastructure while unattended could also delay the delivery of incoming electronic mail during the next working day, as undeliverable Internet mail accumulates.
- Telephone support for software applications will no longer be available on a 24-hour basis. These services will operate only during regular United Nations working hours.
- Scheduled computer-related services such as installation, replacement, disconnection and/or reconnection of computers to the local area network will need to be requested with substantially longer lead times. Offices are advised to request these services at least 10 working days in advance.
- Services for meetings, especially those provided by contract sound engineers and other contract personnel, will be restricted to normal United Nations working hours.

7. While significant in their magnitude, the service reductions set out above approach but do not equal the level of the budgetary savings mandated by the General Assembly. Accordingly, expenditure patterns will be carefully monitored to ascertain whatever additional appropriate action may be required.

8. It is fully recognized that these measures will, to some unavoidable extent, hamper the work of the Organization and unfortunately create some discomfort in the workplace. Nevertheless, the understanding, cooperation and assistance of all staff is sought in striving to achieve the economies outlined above.